



The Need and Relevance of Archives in Nigerian Universities Libraries

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the need and relevance of Archives in Nigerian Universities. The design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey. The study utilized two research questions and one hypothesis. A sample of 80 professional librarians was drawn from a respondent population of 265 in libraries in four universities in South South Nigeria. Data was collected with a self-designed questionnaire called "Need and Relevance of Archives questionnaire (NRAq)". The instrument which was patterned after a modified likert 4 point rating scale contained 18 items were used. Data was analyzed with mean and t-test. Findings revealed that Nigerian universities should have their own archives (archival centers), to help in preserving their archives which is a major source of research primary source. It was recommended that Archives should be built in all Nigerian Universities and Archivists employed.

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INTRODUCTION

An archive as described by Aina (2004) is an accumulation of historical records, or a physical place where such records are kept. Procter (2002) also defines an archive as a place for keeping the historical records of a place or organization. It can also be seen as a repository of records of historical value, meaning a place where historical records are kept. History is the record of important past events (Obaro, 2014). So if archives are places for keeping historical records, that means without archives, histories are lost, cultures and like terms are also preserved.

Understanding the above definitions, archives can be seen in two forms. Firstly as a physical place where historical records are kept. Secondly, as a repository of these historical records. This can be referred to as archival records. So whether as a place, or as records, whichever term used here can be referred to as archives. A person who works in an archive is called an archivist. The study and practice of organizing, preserving and providing access to information and materials in archives is called archival science. Archival collections are referred to as fonds.

The relevance of archives cannot be over emphasized hence this study.

Archives consists of records that have been selected for permanent or long form preservation on grounds of their enduring cultural, historical or evidently value. They are most times unpublished and unique. They are repository of records of

historical value but differ from libraries because libraries focus on published information like books and periodicals. They differ from museums because museums focus on artifacts or physical objects. But archives focus on unpublished original records. They contain primary source documents that have accumulated over the course of an individual or organizations life time and are kept to show the functions of that person or organization. They have been described by Maher (2012) as "the records of any public or private institution which are adjudged worthy of preservation for reference and research purposes and which have been deposited or have been selected for deposit".

Archival records make up first-hand information of any organization. But a pilot study conducted by the researcher on institutions of higher learning in the South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria shows the absence of archives and archival records. Similarly, not much work has been done on this area and that is why the study is set to investigate the roles of archives and the need for archival centres in some selected Nigerian Universities.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Investigate the roles of Archives in Nigerian Universities.
- 2) Highlight on the relevance of archives (archival centers) in Nigerian Universities.

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Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- (1) What are the roles of Archives in Nigerian Universities?
- (2) What are the relevance of archives (archival centres) in Nigerian Universities?

Hypothesis

This hypothesis was formulated for the study.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of librarians in federal universities and state universities in South South Nigeria on the relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Archives are those vital original documents that serve as means for the preservation and presentation of the cultural heritage and identity of the higher institutions. Hayes (2018) opines that they are important because they provide evidence of activities and tells us more about the institutions.

The international Council on Archives (2016) adjudges archives important and relevant to have in the higher institutions because they provide direct windows on past events for they are contemporary records created by the institutions involved as they go doing their businesses.

The society of American archivists (2018) in elaborating on the needs for Archives in the institutions of higher learning opines that “Archival records do not happen. They are created by the organizations like the higher institutions and are used in turn to support their values and visions all of which comprises a process that is certainly not politically and culturally neutral. Similarly Maidabino

(2010) has the views that archives can help the institutions serve as a means of empowering citizens against potential mal – administration. And this is because as opined by Maher (2012) there is no political power without control of the archive. This Obaro, and Obaro (2014) believe can be helpful in nation building.

Archival records can come in a wide range of formats including written, photographic, moving image, sound, digital, analogue and other forms.

They consist of older data that is important and relevant to the organizations that are usually needed for future reference or retained for regulatory compliance (Obaro and Obaro, 2014, Society of American Archivists, 2018).

Archives are important because they provide evidence of activities and tell us more about the organization, helping to increase the organization sense of identity (Kings College Cambridge, 2018). Archives and archival records help us to remember things after they happen. The National archives in Nigeria has its headquarters in Abuja with branches in Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna. It will therefore be worthwhile for institutions of higher learning to have their own archives where they can preserve their historical records, so as to not to over labour the national archives. Hence this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. This is so because the researcher describes the variables without manipulation. The population consists of all librarians (respondents) from four Universities in the South South zone of Nigeria namely Delta State University Abraka (Delsu), University of Benin (Uniben), Federal University of Petroleum Effurun, Warri (Fulpre) and Federal University Otu-Oke, (Otu-Oke) Bayelsa State as illustrated below.

Table 1: Distribution of Population

S/N	Name of University	Professional Library Staff	Para-Professional Library Staff	Non-Prof Library Staff	Total
1.	Delsu	13	18	26	57
2.	Fulpre	25	04	04	33
3.	UniBen	31	60	44	135
4.	Otu-Oke	11	12	17	40
	Total	80	94	97	265

The stratified random sampling was used to select 80 librarians, (respondents) made up of only professional library staff of the four Universities

selected for the study. As illustrated in the population, there are a total number of 265 librarians in these universities. 80 are professionals,

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94 Para-professionals and 97 non-professional staff. The 80 professional staff were chosen as they were considered best for the study because they are professionals.

The instrument for data collection was an eighteen item questionnaire titled "Need and Relevance or archives questionnaire (NRAQ), patterned after the four point scale. Respondents were free to agree or disagree with any statement on the questionnaire on a continuum ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree as follows: strongly agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1. The instrument was

validated by two experts in the field of librarianship and measurement and evaluation. The instrument was tested for reliability through test re-test method and its reliability stood at 0-71.

The questionnaire were administered through trained research assistants together with the researcher to the respondents and were collected on the spot. The data collected was analyzed using weighted means and t-test. Each subject was scored on the basis of his/her responses to the statement. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

- 1) What are the roles of archives in Nigerian Universities?

Table 1: Roles of archives in Nigerian Universities

N = 80

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	MEAN	Remarks
1.	Does your library have archival records?	2.87	Disagreed
2.	Do you consider archives important?	3.60	Agreed
3.	Archives are important in the institutions of higher learning?	3.62	Agreed
4.	They are a guaranteed source of primary sources of information.	3.87	Agreed
5.	They are very relevant in researches.	3.62	Agreed
6.	They are the most reliable source of information about the institutions.	3.62	Agreed
7.	Through archival records, institutions are empowered against any form of maladministration.	3.12	Agreed
8.	They help in the understanding of the objectives and missions of the institutions.	3.37	Agreed
9.	Archives are created and therefore are politically and culturally neutral.	3.62	Agreed
10.	They tell us more about the organization.	3.25	Agreed
	3.41		

Table 1: Shows the role of Archives in Nigerian Universities. The respondents generally agreed on the identified roles of archives in Nigerian Universities.

Table 2: The relevance for Archives (Archival Centre) in Institution of Higher Learning

N = 80

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	MEAN	Remarks
1.	Archival materials should be preserved in Archives (Archival Centres).	4.00	Agreed
2.	They should be kept separately from books and other materials in the library.	3.62	Agreed
3.	Archives are relevant in institutions of higher learning to preserve, conserve and disseminate archives (Archival records).	3.56	Agreed
4.	They provide evidences of the activities of the institutions.	3.12	Agreed
5.	Having Archives (Archival centres) will boost the use of archives (Archival records).	3.87	Agreed
6.	It will bring to limelight the relevance of archives as most people do not know about archives.	3.69	Agreed
7.	It will help preserve and conserve contemporary records created by the institutions in the course of their activities.	3.62	Agreed
8.	It is good for the institutions to have their own archives (archival centres) where they can preserve their own records.	3.87	Agreed
	3.67		



The respondents generally agreed on the identified relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of librarians in Federal Universities and State Universities in South South zone, on the relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities.

Table 3: Summary of t-test on the perception scores of libraries in Federal Universities and State Universities in South South zones on the relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities.

Educational Institutions	Mean Perception	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	cf	Remarks
Federal Universities	3.08	0.95	78	0.35	1.99	0.05	Result Not Significant Accept null hypothesis
State Universities	2.94	1.52					

As shown in table 3, the t-calculated produced a value of 0.35 while the t-table value obtained was 1.99. Since the t-calculated value of 0.35 is less than the table value of 1.99, the null hypothesis was therefore accepted at 0.05 level of significance. The conclusion was drawn that there is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of librarians in Federal Universities and State Universities on the relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities. This implies that librarians do not differ significantly in their perception on the relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities.

DISCUSSION

The finding reveals the relevance of archives in Nigerian Universities. For Archives (Archival materials) are sine qua non to information because they are the most reliable source of information about the institutions. Institutions of higher learning are known for researches, and archival records are the most guaranteed primary sources of information. They also help in the understanding of the missions and objectives of the higher institutions. This claim agrees with Obaro and Obaro (2014) who opined that "Archives (archival records) are second to none as the most reliable source of information because they are graded as primary sources of information and primary sources of information are more reliable compared to secondary sources in researches".

Similarly the study also revealed that archives (archival materials) should be kept separately from books and other materials in the library. This is because they provide evidences of the activities of the institutions. To achieve this then, as noted by Obaro and Obaro (2014), all higher institutions should have their archives (archival centres) that will help them preserve and conserve

contemporary records created by the institutions in the course of their activities. This claim agrees with Ojo (2014) who stated firmly that archives are primary documents needed in the process of constructing an institution because they assist historians in interpreting the past.

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of librarians in Federal Universities and State Universities in South South Nigerian zone on the relevance of archives in institutions of higher learning. This shows that all librarians sampled agreed on the relevance of archives and the need to establish archives (archival centres). This is also in line with the views of Obaro (2009) who wrote that archives in Nigeria are in the state of becoming than being. There are the absence of archives and no regulatory policies to enforce the establishment of archives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion therefore, archives cannot be ignored in our institutions of higher learning. Nigerian archival records generally and especially that of the institutions of higher learning have become endangered species of documents. The National archives of Nigeria cannot handle all the cases of archives so there is the need for institutions of higher learning to have archives (archival centres) where they can take care of their archives (archival records).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

1. All higher institutions should have an archive (archival centres) which should be separate from libraries, to conserve



- and preserve their archives (archival records).
2. Archivists should be employed in these higher institutions to take care of the archives (archival materials).
3. Two out of the studied universities are still young universities and should be encouraged to have an archive now so as to have good repositories.

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